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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a curriculum that attempts to provide counselor trainees with the necessary abilities to improve their counseling after they leave the learning environment and enter the world of work. These efforts come through training in self-control techniques during a counselor education masters program. A first course exposes trainees to behavior modification techniques and sets a self-modification task. This course is followed by one in which the self-management techniques are applied to the modification of problem behaviors related to the trainees' ability to interview. Videotape and role-playing techniques are employed. Trainees are then encouraged to use the self-management techniques in practicum. There is also a brief description of the inclusion of self-modification training in the Ph.D. program. The techniques appear to be of significant help. (NG)

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USE OF SELF-CONTROL PROCEDURES IN THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

by

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Introduction

In the opinion of many educators today, the ultimate goal of education is to provide a learning experience that will promote the continual growth and enrichment of the student after completion of his/her formal education. Unfortunately, this situation appears to be the exception, rather than the rule. The same is true for counselor education since it is widely known that most counselor graduates participate in little, if any, significant learning experiences after they enter the world of work. Given this situation, the question is asked, what can counselor educators do to provide counselor trainees with the necessary abilities to improve their counseling after graduation?

In response to the dilemma and also, the current literature on self-control, the counselor educators at Michigan State University decided that training in self-control might furnish one possible solution. Empirical studies investigating self-control techniques have shown a considerable degree of success with clients. Why couldn't they also be used for changing counselor behavior in their education? Initially, it was reasoned that training in self-control or as it is termed when used for learning purposes, self-management, would enable counselor trainees to modify any problem behavior, personal as well as professional. Furthermore, and quite importantly, these techniques could be applied both during and after their schooling. Thus at this point, it appeared that knowledge of self-management techniques would prepare the counselor with adequate skills to continually modify and improve upon his/her counseling behavior.

With these important considerations in mind, training in self-management procedures has been integrated into the counselor education program on both the Master's and Doctoral level. The following portion of the paper will attempt to present the current stage of development of such integrations in our program with an explanation of rationale for each.

M. A. Program

Many of the required courses in the training program are sequentially arranged such that the trainee is gradually exposed to increasingly complex subject matter. With the level of complexity and function of each course in mind (at least part of the time), self-management procedures were introduced into the coursework in such a manner that they would complement and enhance learning.

The first course in this sequence, Seminar in Counseling Practice (819A), provides the trainees with their initial exposure to behavior modification procedures. In order to facilitate this learning experience and acquaint the trainee with the effect of behavior modification techniques, a self-management project is assigned. The text, Self-Directed Behavior: Self-Modification for Personal Adjustment by Watson and Tharp, guides the trainee through their project (The authors have developed a comprehensive, programmed approach toward self-management training.). Supplementary assistance is provided by the instructor whenever needed, both during an allotted time in class or by appointment. Trainees are encouraged to pick any personal behavior they would like to change, although suggestions of appropriate behaviors are given if necessary. At the end of the term, all projects are turned in and evaluated as part of the overall course

grade. This initial exposure to self-management techniques is very important, and although it is evaluated, everything is done to make it a very rewarding (eventually self-rewarding) experience. Lastly, since relevance is always an important issue, the trainees are shown how these same techniques that are being used to change their behavior, can also be used with their future clients.

In the following course, Counseling and Consulting Strategies (819E), the self-management techniques taught in 819A are applied to the modification of problem behaviors related to the trainees' ability to interview. The techniques learned in this quarter may determine whether or not a trainee will continue to use self-management procedures after graduation, and therefore, this is another very critical time. However, only recently (Winter quarter, 1975) has the department developed specific training in self-management techniques for interview behavior, so we are still in the stages of evaluating its effect on the trainees and considering possible modifications and improvements. A brief description of the procedures used to implement the training will now be presented with suggestions for improvements elicited from the trainees:

Procedures used Winter Quarter, 1975. At the beginning of the quarter, students were informed that, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of this course, they would be participating in a project directed at improvement of interviewing skills; in addition, a paper on their experience would be required. The students were then instructed to form groups of three for the purposes of videotaping role plays of a counseling interview. The trainees were

encouraged to develop their own interviews. During each taping, one trainee would monitor the recorder while the other two would be role playing the client and counselor. These roles were rotated until each trainee had the opportunity to interview a client. However, each interview was played back and reviewed immediately following taping. To facilitate constructive feedback, each student was cautioned to attend to appropriate as well as inappropriate behavior in the interview.

It was hoped that the trainees would identify and select an interview behavior to change or improve during the quarter. No specific guidelines were provided for this experience. Lastly, it was suggested (not required) that the trainees get back together and tape again during the last week of the quarter to determine if they had made any progress.

Suggestions. Overall, the trainees enjoyed the videotaping and role playing, but most felt that more structuring was needed. They suggested that specific guidelines for each phase of the self-management project be drawn up. Also, they reported that a statement of rationale explaining the purpose of the project would have been extremely helpful. Without an explanation, many had felt that the project was "just another exercise". Other suggestions included the use of a behavioral checklist of problem interview behaviors to guide them in assessing their interviewing skills. However, they wanted to be free to select other behaviors than those listed. Lastly, they felt that the project would have been

most helpful if it had been a full-scale effort similar to the one done the previous quarter. (Self-management training must be good if counselor trainees actually want to invest additional time and energy in it!)

In Spring quarter, the trainees receive their first counseling practicum experience (819F). Although the difficulties they face span a wide range of problems, their supervisors encourage them to use self-management procedures to meet those kinds of difficulties for which they have been prepared; namely, (1) as a strategy for their clients, and (2) as a means to change problem behaviors in their interviews. The second type of problem dealing with interview-related behavior is frequent among first-quarter practicum trainees for many are generally very anxious. As an example, the tape recording of each interview elicits high levels of anxiety which interfere with adequate interviewing skills. The supervisor may suggest such self-management strategies as desensitization, assertion training, etc. Supervisors strongly reinforce attempts at self-management, since continued reassessment and modification of one's counseling behavior is seen as essential to the professional counseling process.

In the Summer quarter, the trainee is taught how to utilize various counseling strategies, including self-management techniques, in a course on experimental research design, The Counselor as Researcher (819K). Usually N of 1 studies are emphasized, but group studies are also investigated. The following quarter marks the beginning of the second and last supervised practicum experience (819G). The emphasis in the course is on an integration

and a refinement of the instruction and training the student has received, including his repertoire of self-management techniques. Hopefully, at the end of the program the trainee has learned that self-management skills can be utilized as appropriate strategy for the modification of client behavior, and continual improvement of his/her own counseling (and personal) behavior.

Ph. D. Program

The heterogeneous background of candidates in this program necessitates an intensive introductory course of behavior modification principles and learning approaches. As in the Master's program, a self-management project is assigned along with a number of readings on self-control. A seminar approach is currently being used which facilitates the sharing of ideas about behavior modification.

The overall orientation toward self-management is not as structured as the M.A. program, but it is stressed according to the individual demands of the candidate's program. For instance, self-management of one's counseling behaviors may be suggested by one's supervisor in the doctoral level practicum. Also, since many doctoral students have been quite interested in this area, they have investigated it through reviews of the literature and research projects. Some of this research has received national attention.

Conclusion

We in the Counselor Education Program, feel that the incorporation of self-management procedures into our counselor education program at Michigan State University has significantly improved the overall effectiveness of our training. Their use in the M.A. program has not only

facilitated the learning of behavior modification techniques, but provided our trainees with the necessary tools to modify the behavior of their future clients and continually improve their own (personal and professional). On the doctoral level, self-management techniques have lead to the improvement of teaching and supervising efforts, and opened a relatively new area of valuable research. Currently, these conclusions are based primarily on our impressions. Hopefully, we soon will be able to present some hard data supporting the efficacy of training in self-management procedures in counselor education.

Summary Outline: Use of Self-Management Techniques at Michigan State University (Master's Program)

Quarter	Course Sequence*	Focus Toward Integration of Self-Management Procedures
Fall	Seminar in Counseling Practice, 819A	While trainees are instructed in behavior modification procedures, they are supervised in their own self-management projects. Selection of the problem behavior is individually determined.
Winter	Counseling and Consulting Strategies, 819E	The self-management techniques taught in 819A are used to change trainee's interview problems identified through a videotaped role-play. (This technique is being used experimentally at this time.)
Spring	Counseling Practicum I, 819F	Supervisors encourage the use of self-management techniques with their trainees' clientele and also with difficulties in interview-related behavior; e.g., self-desensitization as an appropriate strategy for fear of interview recording.
Summer	The Counselor as Researcher, 819K	Self-management techniques are suggested as possible strategies in a number of research projects designed by the trainees.
Fall	Counseling Practicum II, 819G	This course is similar to the first practicum experience, 819F, except that the emphasis is on the refining of techniques. Hopefully, the research design learning in 819K is integrated into the trainee's counseling.

*This course sequence is modified for off-campus programs.